

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DRYDEN SCHOOL**

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 131200

Headteacher: Mrs G Foster

Lead inspector: Katharine Halifax

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 258893

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of students:	11 – 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	55
School address:	Shotley Gardens Low Fell Gateshead
Postcode:	NE9 5UR
Telephone number:	0191 4203811
Fax number:	0191 4203701
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Murray
Date of previous inspection:	Section 12 inspection June 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school caters for students between the ages of 11 and 19 years. Students come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. With 55 on roll, the school is smaller than most special schools. All students have special educational needs ranging from severe to profound and multiple needs. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of pupils of this age. The school population is changing with an increase in the number of pupils who are non-ambulatory and those who have more complex needs. Almost all pupils are of white European origin, although two do not speak English as their main language. There are more boys than girls. Most students spend the whole of their secondary education in the school with very few students starting or leaving the school other than at the usual time.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25439	Katharine Halifax	Lead inspector	Mathematics Art and design Citizenship Music Religious education Special educational needs
9572	Kitty Anderson	Lay inspector	
16198	Carol Etherington	Team inspector	English Geography History French
19386	Dr Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Personal, social and health education English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school provides an acceptable standard of education, but has serious weaknesses in its leadership and management and in the curriculum it offers. Nevertheless, it gives satisfactory value for money.**

Teaching is satisfactory so students make satisfactory progress overall. Staff are caring and support students' personal development very well. However, students do not regularly receive the full range of subjects to which they are entitled. Managers are committed to including all students in all activities, but have been slow to make improvements in what is taught. Parents are very satisfied by what the school offers.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is good in mathematics, communication, the creative arts and in personal, social and health education.
- Very good relationships between staff and with other professionals and high levels of care enable students of all ages and capabilities to take full advantage of learning opportunities.
- Very good provision for personal development has enabled students to make very good progress in the acquisition of social skills and in creating an atmosphere that is calm and conducive to learning.
- Weaknesses in leadership and management affect what is taught and how it is taught.
- Though satisfactory, the quality of teaching has not kept pace with the national trend.

Since the last inspection in June 1998, the headteacher has successfully managed the move to new premises with minimum disruption to learning. Improvements have been made in equipment and in the number of support staff. Achievement in information and communication technology has improved and is now satisfactory. Students now receive good careers guidance. However, weaknesses in the curriculum identified at the last inspection still remain five years on. Though less unsatisfactory teaching was seen than in the last inspection, the percentage of good and very good teaching has declined. As such, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 9	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 11	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>
Year 13	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

**Achievement is satisfactory overall by the end of Years 9, 11 and 13.** All do well in the creative arts of music and art and design, in mathematics, and personal social and health education. Similarly, all do well and make good progress in communication. Achievement in information and communication technology and religious education is satisfactory. Students do not achieve as well as they should in science, history, geography and French because these subjects have not been taught regularly.

**Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** As a result, students are very well behaved and have a positive attitude to school. All are growing in confidence and persevere with the activities provided. Attendance is good, particularly taking account of the health of some students. However, some are late arriving because of transport difficulties.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education is satisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory.** It is good in Years 7 to 9 and in personal, social and health education. Support staff, teachers and other professionals work very well together sharing skills and enabling small group work so students get more attention. Students make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans, but learning in some subjects is limited because teachers do not sufficiently plan the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire. The curriculum has positive features including special study days, the arts and arrangements for admitting students into school and in preparing students for life after school. However, a number of subjects are not taught as regularly as they should be and this affects achievement. In addition, the school day is too short and some lessons do not start on time whilst others finish very early. This makes learning opportunities unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, all staff know the students very well and provide very good care and support for their personal needs.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Though leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall,** the head, deputy and senior teacher have very successfully created a school where staff and students feel valued and are treated with dignity. They manage the budget well. They have provided a lot of training for staff, though this has not always been in the areas that have been needed. Governors support the school well, but most have not yet acquired the skills to challenge and monitor the school's effectiveness. Priorities for development are identified, but the rate of improvement has been too slow.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Students like the school. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They especially like the new building, the commitment of staff to the personal development of their child and the calm, friendly atmosphere.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Give greater priority to what is taught and how it is taught
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure students are taught all parts of all the subjects to which they are entitled.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is **satisfactory**. It is not appropriate to judge standards against the national average.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in mathematics, communication, the creative arts and personal, social and health education is good.
- Students make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans, especially in communication and personal, social and health education.
- Achievement in the major subject of science is unsatisfactory
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of students who do not speak English as their main language to that of their classmates. Similarly students with additional special needs achieve as well as others in their group.
- There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
- Achievement in geography, history, and a modern foreign language is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

1. As at the time of the last inspection, achievement in communication and personal, social and health education is good in all age groups. Good emphasis is placed on using symbols, signs and speech in order for all students to understand and be understood. Achievement in religious education remains satisfactory. Achievement in information and communication technology and mathematics has improved because good attention has been given to these subjects. In information and communication technology, achievement is now satisfactory. In mathematics, achievement is good in Years 7 to 11, it is only satisfactory in the post 16 unit because insufficient time is spent on promoting numeracy and some students are not sufficiently challenged. Students in all age groups now achieve well in the arts because of very good links with specialist teachers and artists.

2. Students in all age groups make good progress towards targets set in their individual education plans and behaviour plans because teachers are mindful of these in lessons. In addition, some teachers use morning form time well to work on individual targets.

3. Staff provide well for the very few students who do not have English as their main language. The progress they make is similar to their classmates, whether good, as in mathematics, or unsatisfactory, as in some other subjects. All staff know the students well and teachers have drawn up additional personal targets. Wherever appropriate they are expected to practice speaking English. Students with more complex and profound needs are fully included in all lessons with their peers and make similar progress because all adults have a very good knowledge of their additional needs and because of the work of support staff.

4. At the time of the last inspection, progress in science was judged to be satisfactory. It is now unsatisfactory. This is because managers have decided this is not a major subject and little time has been devoted to developing a programme or ensuring it is taught weekly. In addition, some teachers have low expectations of what can be achieved and evidence shows the focus has been on personal and social education rather than the acquisition of scientific knowledge and skills. Though very good teaching was seen in one science lesson and students made very good gains in their learning, overall achievement is unsatisfactory because the subject has not been taught regularly with new units having been introduced the week prior to the start of the inspection.

5. Similarly, despite the criticisms of the previous inspection to ensure each student received a broad and balanced curriculum, achievement in geography, history and French remains unsatisfactory. Although study days have contributed to these subjects, they have not been



sufficiently frequent and planning for focused units of work is not far enough developed to show how students of differing capabilities will develop knowledge, skills and understanding.

## **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

6. As at the time of the last inspection, the very good provision for students' personal development is reflected in their positive attitudes and very good behaviour. Attendance is good.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are very well behaved and show respect for others.
- Opportunities to make choices and take responsibility help students mature.
- Very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development contributes significantly to students' social skills.
- Some aspects of provision for students' cultural development could be improved.

7. Students arrive at school in a positive frame of mind, willing to take full advantage of the opportunities on offer. They are proud of their achievements in lessons and especially their recent success with plants in a local show.

8. Staff have successfully created a calm, purposeful atmosphere where high expectations of behaviour and consideration for others result in an orderly community. Movement between lessons and at break times is extremely well organised. Behaviour is very good both in lessons and at break times. Students with more complex behaviour are helped to make very good improvement through effective management plans. Through the school code of conduct and work in citizenship, all become aware of the responsibilities of living in a community and how, as an individual or part of a group, they can change things for the better, by, for example, making suggestions to members of the school council.

9. High priority is placed on personal development. Students are encouraged to take on responsibilities and do as much as possible for themselves. Through practical activities they learn to work independently, for example when cooking or washing up. They transfer skills learned in the classroom into the community when visiting shops and exchanging coins for goods. All are encouraged to take an active part in their personal hygiene and make healthy choices of food. Most students have daily tasks such as tidying shelves. Those with more profound needs often accompany a more able student when for example, taking the register to the office. At lunchtime, students make their way to the serving hatch, make their choice of meal, eat, then sensibly clear away. During lesson and break times, they are expected to make choices of activities and are encouraged to work together so learning to share and support others.

10. Each member of the community is valued and treated with respect. In turn, students show respect for others. Students who do not speak English as their main language are well integrated into the life of the school. They work and play amicably alongside the others, and one is a member of the school council. Through worship and religious education they are made aware of the similarities in faiths and so learn to respect the customs of all. Spiritual awareness is fostered through moments of quiet reflection whilst focusing on a candle at the start of each day and, for example, working with a woodsmith to make a bench in memory of a student's mother.

11. Provision for cultural development is less strong. Students' appreciation of the arts is successfully fostered through visits by artists, musicians and through participating in theatre workshops. However, there is little beyond the Western World and the lack of history and geography limits students' appreciation of their own cultural heritage and that of other countries, though a study day on Brittany gave them an insight into Breton pottery and dance.

12. The attendance of most students is very good. Those who can attend when they are well enough. However, the school has a number of fragile students who have lowered the rate of attendance. Nevertheless, overall attendance is good.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	11
National data	9.1*

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0
National data	0.6*

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

\*data for schools for pupils with similar needs.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

13. The school provides a **satisfactory education**, but there are serious weaknesses in the curriculum.

**Teaching and learning**

14. The quality of teaching is **satisfactory**. Teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. This is reflected in students' learning. Systems for assessing and recording achievement are satisfactory.

**Strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers, support staff and other professionals work very closely together for the benefit of all students.
- Staff manage challenging and complex behaviours very well resulting in students behaving appropriately and a calm atmosphere conducive to learning.
- Most teachers do not plan what knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire in each lesson in each subject.
- Most teachers do not review the learning that has taken place in each lesson.
- Staff have a very good knowledge of working with students with more severe, profound and complex needs.
- Few teachers provide activities to support learning at home.

**Commentary**

15. Effective staff teams have been established in all classes. Highly trained support staff contribute well to students' learning. Teachers, support staff and health professionals plan together which leads to unified provision, aiding concentration, contributing to students' independence and helping the more vulnerable. To deal with the wide spread of abilities, support staff are used successfully for small group and individual work so students get more attention thus increasing their rate of learning. Staff work together equally well to support students for whom English is not their first language or where there is a gender imbalance, enabling all to take a full part in all activities.

16. All adults quickly form very good relationships with students enabling them to be confident and to want to learn. It is testimony to the hard work of staff that, although one third of students had been in school only eight days, an atmosphere of calm already allowed learning to take place uninterrupted. Where necessary, behaviour plans are drawn up for students who demonstrate extreme behaviours. The consistent use of such plans has resulted in most responding to a meaningful glance or quiet word. Where this is not sufficient, time out of the room with an adult helps the student while allowing others to learn without being disturbed.

17. As a result of an intensive training programme in early development staff are now much more skilled in working with students with more profound and complex needs. The training has enabled staff to be more analytical and provide activities to match individual needs allowing students to make

good gains in their development. In addition, staff have a very good understanding of students medical and physical needs. During lessons, they ensure each student is correctly positioned in order to feel comfortable and gain maximum benefit from their learning. Those with visual or hearing impairment are seated where they can best see and hear their teacher. Staff use sign language and symbols to accompany the spoken word so all understand what is happening and can communicate. Staff have a good knowledge of new technology which allows students who do not vocalise to communicate their contributions while enabling staff to check their learning.

18. The quality of teaching has not kept pace with national trends and is, overall, not as good as at the time of the last inspection. Though less unsatisfactory teaching was seen, the percentage of good or better teaching has declined. Much of this is because most teachers' planning is focused on targets in individual plans and the activities to be undertaken rather than the knowledge and skills that will be acquired in each subject in each lesson. Teachers have worked hard to address the criticism of individual education plans identified by the previous inspection and made targets clearer and measurable to identify progress. However, the focus on individual targets in each lesson necessitates complicated management of students and resources and affects the pace and direction of the lesson. This reduces the rate of learning.

19. Most lessons observed ended with a review where students celebrated and told others of the activities they had undertaken. Where teaching was more effective, teachers were clear about the knowledge and skills to be acquired, enabling students to recognise what they had learned and communicate this in the review. However, because some are not clear about what each student will learn in each subject, the review is not as effective as it should be. Regular team meetings ensure staff are aware of how students are performing, though the focus is more often on behaviour rather than academic achievement. Whilst detailed records are maintained of improvement towards targets in individual education plans, little ongoing recording takes place for the knowledge and skills acquired each day. Very little homework is given to support and extend learning.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	8	11	2	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

**The curriculum**

20. Overall, the curriculum is unsatisfactory with serious weaknesses. Though some improvements have been made since the last inspection, many of the criticisms remain unaddressed five years on. The pace of development has been too slow therefore improvement is unsatisfactory.

**Strengths and weaknesses**

- Students do not have the opportunity to study all the subjects to which they are entitled in any depth.
- A lot of teaching time is lost in an already short day.
- Not all subjects have schemes of work.
- Imaginative provision for the arts contributes significantly to achievement in music, art and dance.
- Provision for citizenship, personal, social and health education, and careers education and guidance is good.
- The accommodation provided in the new purpose-built premises is very good, and offers very good potential for what can be taught.

- Study days, for example, in religious education and careers education contribute well to learning.

21. As at the time of the last inspection, the school has still to ensure that the full programmes of study for science and design technology are securely included in the curriculum. Without appropriate consultation, managers have sidelined science from its position as a main subject. Plans to include history and geography in a rolling programme of units of study remain at an early stage of development, though this has been carried forward from previous improvement plans, resulting in students continuing to make unsatisfactory progress in the humanities. There has been little attempt to provide a modern foreign language for students in Years 7 to 9 with the manager appointed to co-ordinate and develop the subject neither speaking the language, nor having been offered training to build her expertise.

22. The lack of urgency evident in subject provision is reflected in curriculum time. Daily form time is used well by some teachers to prepare students for the day ahead and to work on targets in individual education plans. In other classes, however, there are no structured activities, and the time is used only to await late arrivals and mark the register. While some students undertake planned programmes for eating and drinking and personal hygiene in the long breaks, others have up to two and a half hours out of six hours daily as recreation time. Though the aim of this time is to encourage students to make choices and build relationships, there are no specific programmes and many of these aims could be fostered in lessons. Furthermore, some teachers start lessons late, and combined with the day ending twenty minutes early to enable the smooth organisation of transport this compounds the unsatisfactory use of curriculum time in an already short day.

23. Recently, elements of the National Literacy, Numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies have been introduced for students in Years 7 to 9 and these are starting to have a positive impact on learning in all aspects of English and mathematics. Although some other subjects are well planned, not all curriculum areas have satisfactory schemes of work that identify the knowledge and skills students will acquire or guidance on how to build on existing skills. While staff have identified stages in development for students not able to work at National Curriculum levels, these do not underpin teachers' planning for subjects.

24. Since the last inspection, the move to new accommodation has significantly increased the potential for what can be taught. Specialist rooms have been provided for most subjects, though in some cases these are not used to full advantage. In order to address the criticisms of the arts, very good links have been forged with artists, musicians and with other schools. As a result students now have access to a wide range of resources and the opportunity to perform in one of the most prestigious theatres in Newcastle, contributing significantly to their confidence and achievement. Study days have been introduced to enrich what is taught. For example, students of all ages and capabilities increased their awareness of Judaism through taking part in Shabbat. While these complement what is taught in some subjects, the use of study days to replace lessons in the humanities and in science does not meet requirements.

25. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and is reflected in students' personal development. A well thought out programme for citizenship has been successfully introduced for all age groups. Following the criticism of the last inspection, a good programme of careers education and guidance has been developed. In addition to individual interviews and group work, students have good opportunities to attend courses at various colleges which contribute to their independence. A very good study morning with speakers and activities gave students of all capabilities an awareness of the world of work. School-based work experience such as shadowing staff or serving in the student-run café makes a strong contribution to preparation for life after school. Staff have correctly identified the need to improve opportunities for more able students by extending these to include community based placements to make them even more realistic.

26. Senior managers and governors feel the pace of curriculum development has been appropriate, but this has resulted in a cohort of pupils going through both statutory key stages without access to their full entitlement in a number of subjects. They have therefore not had equality of opportunity with those with similar needs in similar schools. Whilst the school has ensured good

internal inclusion, through ensuring that all capabilities no matter what their range of needs are taught together in mixed ability classes, there are insufficient opportunities for students to learn alongside their mainstream peers. The school is hoping that links currently being established, mainly in the arts, will lead to more such opportunities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

27. As at the time of the last inspection, provision for the health and welfare of students is very good. Staff know their students very well and provide good support, advice and guidance. Good systems are in place to seek students' views.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff and governors ensure students work in a safe and healthy environment.
- Staff provide very good support for personal development.
- Very effective arrangements for transfer are in place.
- Effective systems are in place for taking students' views into account.
- Support for students' academic progress is not as strong as for their personal development.

28. All adults are very safety conscious, checking on potential risks and reviewing systems regularly. Very good procedures are in place to highlight students who may be in need of protection. Staff are very aware of the medical needs of all and ensure these are met. Very close links between staff, parents and with other professionals ensure students are comfortable and able to take part in learning. Outside agencies support students well, although parents are concerned at the irregularity of speech and language therapy. Systems for recording accidents and delivering first aid are very well established. Every effort is made to maintain a student's dignity at all times. A high-quality cleaning programme ensures students work in a clean environment and are not put at risk.

29. Personal support and guidance are good. Termly individual education plans enable staff to monitor and promote personal development very well. All students have academic targets that form the basis of lessons. While these allow for good progress in some subjects, the focus on personal development sometimes reduces the acquisition of knowledge and skills in others. Behaviour management plans for students who display inappropriate behaviour have been well thought out, limiting the risks to others.

30. Effective systems are in place to consult students. All students contribute to their annual review, making decisions about their future. The work of the Student Council allows all to be consulted on ways to improve school routines and facilities. Adults ensure the views of all are taken into account, regardless of need by, for example, siting the suggestion box at a suitable height for wheelchair-users.

31. Funds for the transfer between primary and secondary education have been used very effectively. During the summer term, pupils at the junior school were very well prepared for their new school through shared creative activities and a programme of visits. As a result, the majority settled quickly, making a smooth start to the new school year. Similarly, Post 16 students are very well supported and advised about the next stage of their lives through individual support and a 'Moving On' day where parents and students consider choices, and are advised about funding and benefits.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

32. The school continues to enjoy very good links with parents. It provides them with good information about the school and their child's progress. Good links with the community, other schools and colleges support learning.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- Good links with the community, other schools and colleges contribute to learning.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to work alongside those in mainstream education.
- Parents receive good information.
- Workshops for parents contribute to progress.
- Parents are not sufficiently aware of how they contribute to their child's learning at home.

33. Parents and carers think highly of school particularly the dedication of staff and the support they and their child receive. They appreciate the designated room where they can talk confidentially. Daily diaries between home and school provide an effective means of communication. Meetings to review and set targets, annual reviews and consultation evenings enable parents to discuss and contribute to their child's progress. Occasional workshops such as 'Makaton signing' and 'computers' help parents contribute to their child's learning. There is no home learning policy and, though parents are aware of individual targets, they have too little information about other ways in which they can help their child learn at home. This limits parents' capacity to contribute to progress. A small number of parents help in school such as in the Café, and the very active Friends Association has raised considerable funds for the benefit of students.

34. Productive links with the community and other schools, for example, music projects and dance with a local high school have made a significant impact on achievement in the arts. Though good links with colleges improve learning opportunities for students in post 16 overall insufficient opportunities are provided for students to work alongside their peers in mainstream education. A good number of visitors into school and visits out, including trips to galleries and libraries serve to increase students' understanding of the wider community and enrich learning. The letting of school facilities during the summer and at weekends has been successful in forging further links and in generating useful income for the school.

35. The school goes to considerable effort to ensure that the students' transition to their post school placements is as smooth and stress free as possible. Transition arrangements are discussed with parents or carers and with key professionals so that a suitable placement can be made.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

36. Although the management of the school is **satisfactory**, allowing it to run smoothly, the leadership of the headteacher and key staff is unsatisfactory because they do not have the vision and drive to move the school forward quickly in what is taught. Equally, governors are unsatisfactory because most are not fully aware of their responsibilities.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has created a hard working team.
- Too little progress has been made on important issues from the previous inspection, such as raising the standard of teaching and providing a wider curriculum.
- The headteacher and key staff lack a full understanding of the expectations for a modern and dynamic special school curriculum.
- Governors are not sufficiently active in their role.
- There is no effective check on whether or not staff training improves teaching and learning.

- Financial planning is thorough and linked well to planned developments.
- Day-to-day financial and other administration routines are good.
- The school is committed to including all of its students in as many activities as possible.
- New staff receive very good induction to the workings of the school and the needs of the students.

37. The headteacher and senior staff form a united team. They value and consult staff and are instrumental in fostering the very good atmosphere by their calm approach, resulting in students behaving very well, and having a good attitude to school. All staff and students are included in all activities. Those new to the school report how the warmth of their welcome and their induction allowed them to become familiar with systems and quickly settle into routines. Some changes have been managed very well, such as moving into a new building, but this is long past, and senior staff are now not leading at a vigorous rate. Despite guidance from the previous report, they do not recognise the importance of some aspects in need of improvement, nor in their self-review in preparation for inspection. They do not fully appreciate the importance of efficient use of the school day. The allocation of subject management does not always take account of teachers' skills. For example, the co-ordinator for modern languages does not speak a foreign language. In addition, subject managers are not given sufficient opportunity to monitor and develop their subjects by, for example, observing how teaching is impacting on learning.

38. Though members of the governing body want to help the school, most are not aware of the school's weaknesses, or of some its strengths. Some know what is expected of governors and what needs to be done to make the group more effective. However, few have taken advantage of the training on offer, or have visited classes regularly. Most rely on information from the headteacher. Although they question some proposals, they are not sufficiently active in challenging the headteacher in a positive and developmental way, or in helping to guide the direction of the school. Some statutory requirements are not met.

39. Effective systems allow the school to run smoothly and calmly. Long-term planning and budgeting are well supported by good financial procedures at all levels. Leaders look ahead, and plan how to spend the money carefully, though not always on the most appropriate areas for development. Whilst a lot of data analysis has taken place and is used to set targets, managers are not sufficiently effective in evaluating the overall performance, or in comparing it with that of other schools. There is no formal check on how the frequent staff training has improved teaching or impacted on learning. The audit report two years ago was positive, though one recommendations still has to be met. Managers have made a positive effort to add to the income by letting parts of the building to community users.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	494,294
Total expenditure	456,735
Expenditure per pupil	15,365

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	54,693
Balance carried forward to the next	37,560

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

40. Provision in English is **satisfactory**. However, much of the development is very recent. Improvement since the last inspection has been far too slow and is therefore unsatisfactory.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in speaking and listening, (communication) is good for all ages and capabilities.
- Some teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve in reading and writing.
- Most students make good progress towards the English targets in their individual education plans.
- There are too few opportunities for writing in English and in other subjects.
- Where teachers are implementing national strategies effectively, students are starting to achieve well in reading and writing.
- Students do not have access to a sufficiently wide range of texts.
- Little homework is given to extend and support learning.
- Resources have improved, especially the use of new technology to support learning.

41. Staff place strong emphasis on the development of communication in all subjects so students achieve well in speaking and listening. Those who need speech and language therapy receive appropriate support. Some students contribute using speech synthesisers and others, where appropriate, learn to sign to supplement their communication.

42. Teachers plan well for students to meet the targets in their individual education plans so most make good progress towards these. However, they plan less effectively to develop skills in reading and writing. Consequently, achievement is only satisfactory. Younger students learn letter names and sounds and a variety of symbols to support reading and have access to a graded reading scheme. However, teachers of older students place too much emphasis on developing a social sight vocabulary of words such as 'Entrance' and 'Pay Here' instead of ensuring that the more able continue to improve their independent reading skills.

43. Students who are able learn to write their first and surnames, using capital letters appropriately and some improve through filling in forms and writing simple letters. Some more able students write independently and have a basic understanding of punctuation. Staff use pictorial symbols well to help the less able with their reading and writing. However, most plan too few opportunities to write in a range of styles, especially creative and imaginative writing.

44. As in all subjects, staff provide well for the very few students who do have English as their main language. Their progress and achievement reflects that of their classmates. They learn English through staff speaking clearly to them, using signs and gestures, symbols and pictures. Teachers and support staff work well with them, giving them additional attention when needed. Mainly, however, the lack of English at home is not the main barrier to their learning: it is their other learning difficulties. All staff encourage these students to speak as much as they are able to, and to use signing when this is not possible.

45. Teaching and learning ranged from unsatisfactory to very good, being satisfactory. In the unsatisfactory lesson, one activity lasted for 45 minutes when it could have taken half the time. Though capable, students did not have the opportunity to record their work and learning was unsatisfactory. Conversely, some teachers teach English well, especially where they implement elements of the national strategies effectively. For example, in the very good lesson for students in Years 7 to 9, most of whom were new to the school, the teacher had chosen a text which was about



a real school. Students were encouraged to discuss the school's timetable and a floor plan, and to compare them with those of Dryden. High quality group work included reading and writing tasks based on the text. Students consolidated their learning in an effective review. Very good questioning by the teacher allowed her to assess what each had learned.

46. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Though progress is similar to the last inspection and the co-ordinator has ensured a whole-school focus on communication skills, overall development has been too slow with too little emphasis on reading and writing. The curriculum has weaknesses in planning and includes only a narrow range of literature. Schemes of work that show when and which texts should be studied are being developed for Years 7 to 9, but are not in place for Years 10 and 11. Subject guidelines do not show teachers how to plan effectively for the development of independent reading and writing skills. Planning does not include sufficient objectives for teachers to use to assess students' learning or to enable them to build on what they have achieved. While there has been some monitoring of classroom practice, this has not resulted in overall improvement. An analysis of the time table shows too little time is allocated to the subject. In addition, the timing of some lessons is poor. For example, one class has three lessons a week, two of which are on a Monday morning. This is unsatisfactory because though the teacher endeavours to provide a range of activities, some students find concentration difficult for this length of time.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

47. A few useful examples were seen of students improving their literacy in other subjects. For example, when writing letters to the school council in citizenship, and in food studies when reading symbolic recipes, simple health and safety instructions and worksheets. However, subjects such as religious education and science make little contribution to developing reading and writing. Although most teachers encourage students to record their work briefly in other subjects, there are insufficient opportunities for them to write independently and at length.

### **French**

48. Provision for French is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject manager appointed to co-ordinate provision does not speak the target language and has not had any in-service training to develop any expertise in speaking or teaching French.
- Those teachers who do have subject knowledge and expertise have not been deployed to teach French.
- There is no up-to-date active policy for the teaching of a modern foreign language.
- There are no schemes of work or other guidance on how pupils should be taught the National Curriculum programmes of study for the subject.
- There has been no regular timetable allocation to support any teaching of French.
- The school continues to hold occasional study days where all have opportunities to study aspects of French culture, which contribute positively to their personal development, particularly their cultural awareness.
- The subject manager is building up a bank of resources to support the teaching of the subject whenever this is introduced.
- Several teachers speak fluent French, and contribute to the occasional French study days.

49. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9, who have a statutory entitlement to learn a modern foreign language, make no progress in learning French due to the lack of provision made by the school. This situation is unsatisfactory. Overall, although students have not been disapplied from the subject, little attempt has been made to improve the provision since the last inspection. Photographic and other supporting evidence shows that students and staff enjoy the occasional French study day, and benefit from learning about elements of the geography of France and French food, music, customs and art. However, although this continues to provide a useful European dimension to students' cultural development, this is insufficient to constitute adequate subject provision. The subject

manager has responsibility for three other subjects and demonstrates little commitment to the development of French. Combined with decisions made by the senior managers, this results in unsatisfactory leadership and management of French.

## **MATHEMATICS**

50. Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- The national strategy has given teachers more confidence.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Staff encourage students to extend their understanding of number, time and shape in most lessons.
- Students get the opportunity to transfer their skills to real life
- Limited opportunities in some subjects reduce opportunities for students to use and apply their knowledge.
- Not enough use is made of new technology.
- No homework is given to support learning.
- Students need more work on handling data.

### **Commentary**

51. Students of all capabilities make good progress and achieve well. Those with more complex and profound needs experience feeling shapes and hear adults counting with them. More able students count by themselves and do simple sums. Some are aware of the passage of time. More able students recognise coins and use real money when shopping. Students have a good awareness of shapes and measures. However, their understanding of handling data, for example, interpreting and compiling pictograms and charts is an area for improvement.

52. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have adopted all elements of the national strategy including 'mental maths' which is successful in reinforcing the students' understanding of all capabilities and is challenging to more able students. Teachers organise their lessons well. Students' needs are fully understood and support staff are deployed well so all are fully included in all activities. Much of the work is practical so learning is fun. For example, students increased their understanding of using numbers to ten through throwing beanbags into a circle. All were eager to count as each bag hit the target and more able students proudly demonstrated their skill in recording the numbers. The emphasis on positional language such as 'side', 'front' and 'behind' helped students extend their mathematical vocabulary. Staff form very good relationships with students and expect them to follow their example. This was evident as students assisted each other when recording work or giving clues to answers.

53. Subject management is good. The co-ordinator has recently taught in mainstream schools and has used her knowledge of the national strategy well to support colleagues. She has overseen the purchase of good equipment that matches what is taught and the needs of the students. She has a clear understanding of the strengths of the subject and what needs to be done to improve, especially in using new technology. The co-ordinator has not been allocated time to visit classrooms to monitor the impact of teaching on learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

54. Staff provide good opportunities for students to use and apply their knowledge in some subjects. However, a limited science curriculum, very little design and technology, history and geography mean this aspect is only satisfactory overall. No opportunities have been provided in science for students to extend their mathematical skills by recording their findings in pictorial, graphic or tabular form. As little work takes place in resistant materials, opportunities are lost for estimating

and measuring, though this is done well in food studies. All staff ensure students improve skills during registration, estimating then counting numbers present before calculating the number of absentees. An understanding of time is consolidated through daily calendar and timetable work. Skills acquired in the classroom are transferred to real life when shopping or when measuring the prize-winning leeks. Good reference is made to shape and positional language whenever possible in and out of lessons.

## SCIENCE

55. Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**. Managers do not regard science as a major subject and have not allocated sufficient time. As a result achievement is unsatisfactory.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Senior staff do not have a positive attitude towards the subject, and there has been no urgency to develop it.
- Teachers have low expectations of how well students can learn science.
- Teaching is not focused on scientific learning.
- Students' progress is not assessed sufficiently to make improvements to what is taught next.
- Students' behaviour is managed very well.
- Support staff are very capable members of class teams.
- Senior managers have a negative attitude towards the subject, and there has been no urgency to develop it. Some teachers teach the subject very well.
- No homework is given to support learning.

### Commentary

56. Students' achievements are unsatisfactory; their progress is slow. The work they do is infrequent and most is unchallenging. Students up to Year 9 do not learn about any topic in depth. Too little effort is made to develop their attitude to science, to their knowledge or in using the subject to help develop their reading and writing. Students in Years 10 and 11 are taught science as part of one of their external courses. The science content, however, is not sufficiently challenging for most students. For example, all levels of ability have looked after a flowering pot plant for several weeks, when many students are capable of naming the parts of a plant and recording the conditions for growth. When studying materials and their properties, much of the work is to do with food, rather than being across a range of substances and materials. This restricts students' knowledge and understanding.

57. A few teachers do teach science very well. During the inspection, for instance, one lesson about identifying and exploring solids and liquids was very good. The teacher had planned and prepared thoroughly, using well-chosen resources with a clear focus on the scientific knowledge and skills students would acquire. She kept their full attention from the start, and maintained a fast pace throughout with her enthusiasm and clear focus. Support staff were used very effectively to help and encourage individuals and small groups. All capabilities were very interested. They learned to classify many different substances; thought of their own questions to ask; and tested the various samples to see what they were and how to describe them. Students learned a lot of science, as well as working well together and building their vocabulary.

58. However, long term for many students, learning is unsatisfactory. Lessons are often planned as a series of activities, rather than being clear about the knowledge and skills students will acquire. Some teachers consider success to be the completion of the activities rather than how much students have learned. In addition, too much emphasis is placed on unrelated activities to increase attention or listening rather than improving these through the scientific aspects to be learned.

59. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There has been too little development since the previous inspection, when standards were satisfactory with many of the

same problems being identified. Equipment is not sufficient to help students' learning in the various topics. There has not been a clear plan of what is to be taught in the long term, although there is a fairly new co-ordinator who has begun to develop one. This development is too slow, however, as she is given too little time, guidance or positive encouragement to develop the planning or the resources.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

60. Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**. Students' achievements are satisfactory. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in the use of computer-related equipment to support learning in other subjects.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff create good opportunities to use new technology to help students communicate.
- There is not a clearly structured plan of what is to be taught in the long term.
- Much of the teaching is through other subjects, and there is no real check to see how well students are learning from this.
- Not all teachers are confident in teaching the basic skills.
- A lot of money and effort have been put into this subject because its importance is recognised.
- The subject is managed by a hard-working and well-focused co-ordinator.

### **Commentary**

61. Students make satisfactory progress across a range of topics to do with computers and related high-technology equipment. Those with more profound needs learn to touch a large colourful switch that will speak out their answers or greetings. Others learn to use two switches to make choices. Many students learn to control what is happening on the computer screen, or to operate a CD player, television or microwave oven. More able students use a keyboard to enter words and/or symbols, scribble a picture or pattern, or print off their work, though they often need a lot of adult help to do this. At times, students will download pages from the Internet, though it is difficult to see the value of some of these, as they may be pages of text that students cannot read, or even in a foreign language.

62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In lessons, teachers sometimes work with students individually at the computers, but these sessions are often very brief, and not very challenging. At other times, some teachers are clearly very confident in using the equipment, and are able to teach computer-related skills through other subjects such as English, careers or art. In general, they prepare and plan their lessons well, although not always with clear ICT targets in mind, and so students' do not learn as quickly as they might. Many teachers keep a record of what students have done, but this is not always used to decide on a really challenging target to aim for next. The co-ordinator checks what is planned, not what is actually taught or learned, so there is no good information about students' long term progress. Staff go to great lengths to help the least able students use personalised equipment so that they can join in lessons well. This may involve using a switch that is operated by head movements, perhaps to speak a greeting, a message, or a request.

63. This co-ordinator is leading and managing well. In a relatively short time, he has overseen a great improvement in resources, a good improvement in teaching, and much wider use of computers. A technician is available each week to help with problems. These two members of staff keep the subject running smoothly and are successfully building staff confidence and skills. The co-ordinator is working on a plan of what should be taught in the long term. She recognises there also needs to be a simple check of what students are actually learning in the long term, so that the effectiveness of the teaching can be monitored.

## HUMANITIES

### History and geography

64. Provision for history and geography is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in both subjects.
- There has been insufficient improvement in both subjects since the last inspection.
- Although senior managers and the subject leader for humanities know that there are examples of good practice, there has been no audit of these to identify and share them.
- Although there are plans to develop more study units with a historical or geographical focus, there are still no schemes of work that show how coverage of the programmes will be ensured. Nor are there plans to identify how specific knowledge, skills and understanding will be developed systematically for students of all abilities.
- Although there are now more resources for each subject, these have been purchased before the programme has been planned, and there is no guarantee that they will be appropriate to support learning in each unit.
- Most teachers include basic chronology in form-time, when they encourage students to plan and structure their day through reviewing daily timetables.
- Some teachers include elements of geographical knowledge, skills and understanding in their planning for other subjects, for example, literacy.
- There are some examples of good practice seen where individual classes undertake study units that have a historical or geographical focus, such as opportunities to compare old and new objects, visit museums or study the weather.

#### Commentary

65. Neither subject was securely in place at the time of the last inspection, when the school had been operating in its current form for less than a year. Achievement is unsatisfactory and students make unsatisfactory progress in both subjects as there has been insufficient improvement made in curriculum development and subject provision. No teaching was seen during the inspection.

66. There is little written and other recorded evidence of students' achievements. The subjects are not timetabled or taught discretely, and planning for units of work is not far enough developed to show how the rolling programme will develop knowledge, skills and understanding for students of differing capabilities. The problem of planning appropriate levels of work for students meeting the rolling programme in different years so that all capabilities can systematically build on their prior learning has not yet been addressed. The need to complete subject planning and related documentation for both subjects was identified in the last inspection report and has been prioritised in several recent school improvement plans, but has been carried forward year-on-year. Consequently, unsatisfactory progress has been made, and achievement continues to be unsatisfactory in both subjects.

### Religious education

67. As at the time of the last inspection, provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinator has raised the profile of the subject so teachers are more enthusiastic.
- Some lessons are very short.
- Not a lot of recording takes place.
- Study days enrich learning.
- Weekly assemblies support teaching and learning.

- There has been good improvement in resources.

## Commentary

68. Since the last inspection, staff have become more comfortable teaching religious education. This has been helped by the acquisition of resources and the programme is now in its second cycle. The programme reflects the Gateshead Locally Agreed Syllabus. Though achievement is satisfactory, progress is restricted by time because most lessons take place after break in an afternoon and are cut short by the arrival of transport. Students of all capabilities are gaining an awareness of the beliefs and practices of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Through termly study days, for example, the Jewish Sabbath, they experience the ritual of washing hands and are aware that the 'Challah' is torn rather than cut. More able students recall the prayer is called the Kiddush. Weekly assemblies are used effectively to introduce new topics and reinforce learning. For example, students in one class portrayed the Muslim pilgrimage of Hajj. During the inspection, an assembly helped students consolidate work about the Christian festival of harvest which some will extend further when they attend a service in the local church.

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, evidence from lessons and the sample of work indicates all undertake the same activities regardless of ability and all have exactly the same target in their individual education plans. Staff develop students' communication well by using symbols and signing and support staff are used effectively to ensure students with more profound and complex needs understand. As a result students concentrate well and take an interest in their work. Teachers provide too few opportunities for students to record information thus limiting opportunities for them to improve their literacy.

70. Subject management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator provides good support for her colleagues. The recording of students' achievements is basic, denoting only the activities that students have taken part in rather than the knowledge and skills that have been acquired. No monitoring of teachers' planning or classroom practice has taken place. The teaching of religious education makes a good contribution to students' personal development.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

71. Provision in design and technology is **barely satisfactory**.

72. There is not enough evidence to form a reliable judgement about students' achievements. The previous inspection reported unsatisfactory learning and a very limited range of topics being taught, mainly to do with food. In the food-related lessons, teaching and learning were considered to be satisfactory. An analysis of the planning, students' work and records indicates that this is still largely the case. Much of the learning is about food preparation. This is closely linked with personal and independence skills. Students cover a limited number of aspects of design and technology. This restricts the range of materials and tools that they learn how to use. Only one lesson was seen, and the teaching and learning were good. The lesson was organised well, with the teacher expecting a high standard of behaviour from the students. A good range of fabrics was used in the design of a cushion cover.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

73. Provision in the visual and performing arts is **good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with professional artists and musicians contribute significantly to students' learning.

- Students grow in confidence because of opportunities to perform in public.
- Attractive displays celebrate achievement and support learning.
- Very good accommodation and resources contribute to what is taught.
- Programmes are still being developed.
- Other than in an end of year record, staff do not systematically record the skills students acquire.

## Commentary

74. There has been very good progress in all elements since the last inspection because of a focus on improvement and very good use of community resources. A particularly successful venture held towards the end of the summer term was for pupils in Year 6 from the junior school and students in Years 7 to 9. Working with an artist, dramatists and musicians on the theme 'Space and Monsters', students successfully created colourful costumes and produced a drama which was performed to parents and carers. In addition to producing high quality work, pupils from the junior school were able to strike up friendships and familiarise themselves with their new school.

75. Achievement is good. Displays, photographs, student records and video recordings evidence students have very good opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities. In **music**, they have worked with professional musicians singing, confidently using a microphone, working with sound beams and playing instruments on stage in Newcastle. Students successfully gain an awareness of a number of composers comparing, for example, how tempo is used to set the mood in pieces such as Tchaikovsky's 'Sugar Plum Fairy' and 'Dreaming' by Schumman.

76. In **art and design** students have investigated dyeing, then proudly produced their own design for a tie-dye T-shirt. Younger students have used natural materials such as twigs and herbs to create wall hangings in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. As part of study days, students of all ages and capabilities have taken part in a Breton dance and decorated a plate in Breton Style. Through a link with a local high school, older students have achieved well in dance and drama. Activities in the 'After School Club' such as ceramics, mosaics and creating candle-holders make a good contribution to students' skills and achievements.

77. Two music lessons were observed. Teaching and learning were very good in one and good in a second. In both lessons planning included activities to cover all elements of the subject. As a result, students made good gains in listening, composing and performing. In the lesson where teaching and learning were very good, input by music specialists allowed students of all capabilities to improve their performance by playing instruments correctly, following the 'conductor' and starting and stopping on request. Support staff were used effectively to prompt students so all thoroughly enjoyed the activity. A meaningful look and a sign reminded students with complex behaviour patterns what was expected of them. A moment of joy was seen as one student with profound needs beamed with delight as she produced a sound on her instrument without adult help.

78. Subject management is satisfactory. While the co-ordinator is enthusiastic, as yet there is no programme to identify and build on the skills students acquire and no monitoring of classroom practice. Work in the arts makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, little evidence was available to support an appreciation of art and music from beyond Europe.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

79. There is insufficient evidence to form a reliable judgement about standards and achievement in physical education. The previous report noted good teaching and learning across a wide range of activities, including therapies. An analysis of planning and displays indicates that a wide range of activities is still undertaken. Students learn, for instance to throw and catch balls, to take part in several different games, to swim, and to run, jump and balance when moving over apparatus in the well-equipped hall. The physical development of many students is aided well by the advice and direct help of physiotherapists. The single lesson that was seen was satisfactory. The teacher planned the lesson well, with a good warm-up to start. Students were well motivated to learn, and took part in the

activities willingly. At times, there was not enough emphasis on building individual skills. Those with physical difficulties, including wheelchair users were very well included in the whole of the lesson. Support staff were very capable, and the equipment was used well. A keen and well-qualified teacher co-ordinates the subject, but does not teach beyond her own class. Some students have been to a residential centre where they took part in climbing, canoeing and other adventurous activities.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

80. Provision is **good**. With a large amount of time, and a lot of staff effort, students of all abilities have continued to make good progress across a wide range of aspects since the last inspection.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff put a lot of time and effort into lessons and daily routines to encourage this aspect of students' learning.
- Students all have individual targets to help them gain new skills.
- Some lessons are not well prepared for, or used well, including early morning form time.
- The school council, the café, careers guidance, health workshops, and a new citizenship course contribute very well to the subject.
- Personal targets are often the main focus of lessons that should be more concerned with other subjects.
- Resources are good, and often tailor-made to particular students or small groups.

#### **Commentary**

81. Students make good progress in all age groups and achieve well, regardless of ability. Those with most complex and profound needs become more aware of their bodies, how to choose what they want, and how to communicate with others. Others learn how to wash themselves, clean their teeth, dress themselves, and how to get along together. Students learn to eat and drink as independently as possible. The most able carry out simple shopping tasks with help. They prepare and eat the food they have bought. Learning how to behave in public, or with friends, is a major focus of learning, as is learning to speak up for themselves, and expressing their opinions clearly and politely.

82. Teaching and learning are good. Students are expected to behave very well, and learn to do this very quickly. Teachers mainly prepare their lessons well and imaginatively, basing this on their good knowledge of the subject and of all students. Students are thus motivated to learn, and encouraged to remember what they have learned. Sometimes, however, students will sit and wait for up to twenty minutes at the start of the day, with nothing positive or structured to do. Most lessons, however, focus on personal targets for each individual. Teachers check students' progress frequently, and generally provide greater challenge so learning takes place at a good rate. Support staff are very capable, and are used very well in helping students of all capabilities.

83. Leadership and management are good. This aspect dominates the school ethos. It results in students who are very well behaved, and who are making good gains in their personal skills. Senior managers have rightly chosen to focus on this aspect, though this is sometimes to the detriment of other subjects that should also be taught. Many of the plans for courses are well drawn up, and are imaginative. Good use is made of other professionals for sex education, drugs misuse awareness, and the law for example.



## Citizenship

84. Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- An imaginative programme is in place
- Work in lessons is supported by the work of the school council and classroom routines.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The subject is new so there has been no evaluation of its effectiveness.

### Commentary

85. Achievement is good for all ages and capabilities. Though the subject is new, staff are enthusiastic and discrete lessons are taught to each class with students being given a variety of learning experiences. The subject has a high status in the school, and the curriculum is enriched by the activities of the well-organised school council, fund-raising activities and visits out, for example, to Gateshead Council Chamber to meet the mayor.

86. Students in all age groups are developing a good awareness of how a democracy works through electing members of council then using them to make suggestions for improvements to the school. Through drawing up a school code of conduct they appreciate how and why rules need to be made. Older students consider topical issues in newspapers. Through the expectations of all adults all begin to realise they are part of a community and as such have responsibilities.

87. Teaching and learning in the two lessons seen was good. Staff provided good opportunities for students of all capabilities to express their opinion. They ensured those with more profound needs and those who do not speak English as their first language understood what was being said and took an active role. By the end of the discussion all had communicated an idea for improvement to their classroom. Both lessons had been well planned to enable students to improve their literacy by, for example, preparing a letter to send to the school council. Work was set for each ability group so some used photographs, others symbols whilst the most able copied words written by an adult. At the end of the lesson, students were expected to 'read' their letter to the class.

88. Though the subject is in its infancy, the manager has a clear view of how it will develop. On occasions achievement is recorded against targets in individual education plans, but there is no system for recording the knowledge and skills students acquire. The subject reflects the aims of the school and makes a very good contribution to students' personal development.

## Post 16 Department

89. Provision for students in the post 16 department is **satisfactory**

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in communication.
- More able students are not sufficiently challenged in key skills because some staff have a limited knowledge of teaching numeracy and literacy.
- Students are helped to increase their knowledge of themselves and the community.
- Students produce high quality portfolios for their national award.
- Students are very well prepared for life after school
- Students have access to a limited range of national awards.

## Commentary

90. As at the time of the previous inspection, achievement and progress ranged from satisfactory to good, being sound overall. Achievement is good in units that are based on improving social skills, and in community based activities. For example, students of all capabilities make good gains in understanding how to plan a day out, considering what to wear, where to go and what to eat. All have an awareness of the need to keep healthy through individual therapies and, for example, taking part in Yoga. A basic understanding of personal safety has been acquired through considering health and safety in the home. More able students have been helped to apply for their bus pass and taught to read common signs such as 'ladies', 'no smoking' and 'danger'. Though staff aim to focus on key skills, evidence shows achievements are satisfactory. This is because students do not get sufficient opportunities to extend these aspects of their learning. Students enjoy their work and take pride in compiling and presenting their work for external marking.

91. Teaching and learning ranged from unsatisfactory to very good being satisfactory overall. Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously, taking account of individual needs. However, some are not always clear about what knowledge or skills students will acquire. All provide students with very good opportunities for choice and expect them to communicate. As a result students grow more independent and all make eye contact, vocalise or communicate using a speech synthesiser. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or less effective, the pace of the lesson lacked challenge, forty five minutes was spent on an activity that could have taken twenty with the result more able students became restless and the planned recording did not take place. In a second lesson, a member of staff was unaware that a student was making errors in her numeracy and marked the work 'excellent' at the end of the lesson. Where teaching was very good, in a careers lesson, the lesson was taught at a very good pace and was challenging to all capabilities. During the review students were clear about what they had learned.

92. Management of the unit is good. The co-ordinator keeps a close eye on what is happening in the department, overseeing a wide range of imaginative activities in and out of school that prepare students well for the next phase of their lives. The three times weekly café enables students to improve their social skills and apply their understanding of money in real life. While one nationally recognised award has been introduced opportunities are missed to accredit a number of activities for all capabilities.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>7</b>
Students' achievement	4
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well students learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	5
The leadership of other key staff	5
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*